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**World crime trends and responses: integration and  
coordination of efforts by the United Nations Office on  
Drugs and Crime and by Member States in the field of  
crime prevention and criminal justice**

### **International cooperation in preventing and combating illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources**

#### **Report of the Executive Director**

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## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 16/1, entitled “International cooperation in preventing and combating illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources”, the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, aware that forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources, harvested in contravention of national laws were the object of illicit international trafficking, and concerned that such activities had an adverse environmental, social and economic impact in many countries; also aware that such illicit international trafficking was often perpetrated by individuals and groups, including organized criminal groups that might operate transnationally and that might also be engaged in other illicit activities, and convinced that international cooperation and mutual legal assistance could help prevent, combat and eradicate that form of trafficking:

(a) Strongly encouraged Member States to take appropriate measures, consistent with their domestic legislation and legal frameworks, to strengthen law enforcement and related efforts to combat individuals and groups, including organized criminal groups, operating within their borders, with a view to preventing, combating and eradicating illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources, harvested in contravention of national laws;

(b) Strongly encouraged Member States to cooperate at the bilateral, regional and international levels to prevent, combat and eradicate such trafficking, where appropriate, through the use of international legal instruments such as the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime<sup>1</sup> and the United Nations Convention against Corruption (General Assembly resolution 58/4, annex);

(c) Encouraged Member States to provide information to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) regarding their use of those instruments for fostering international cooperation in that field and to share that information with interested Member States with a view to identifying the areas and scope of such cooperation;

(d) Urged UNODC, subject to extrabudgetary resources, to invite Member States to an open-ended expert group meeting to exchange information, identify ways of improving national capabilities and identify the needs of Member States for international cooperation and/or technical assistance for preventing and combating trafficking in forest products.

2. In the same resolution, the Commission, recognizing the complementarity of its interests in combating transnational organized crime and the interests of the United Nations Forum on Forests in promoting sustainable forest management, with respect to forest law enforcement and governance, and wishing to enhance synergies between the two bodies in that regard, requested its secretariat and the secretariat of the Forum to exchange relevant information on matters related to forest law enforcement and governance and explore ways, as appropriate, to increase synergies.

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 2225, No. 39574.

3. The present report is submitted to the Commission pursuant to its resolution 16/1. It provides an overview and a brief analysis of the replies received from Member States on their efforts to implement that resolution and to prevent, combat and eradicate illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources, harvested in contravention of national laws. The report also contains information on matters related to forest law enforcement and governance, as provided by the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests.

## II. Overview and brief analysis of replies received from Governments

4. In response to a note verbale dated 12 November 2007 from the Secretariat, the Governments of the following 16 Member States provided information as at 23 January 2008: Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Japan, Latvia, Mauritius, Mexico, Namibia, Netherlands, Panama, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Serbia, Slovakia and Tunisia.

5. Belarus referred to national efforts, including the adoption of a presidential decree and the establishment of an ad hoc mechanism at the ministerial level, to curb illegal timber exports. National agencies, such as the Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the State Customs Committee of Belarus, had provided expert evaluations on the export of timber and appropriate documentation enabling customs authorities to control and give clearance for timber exports.

6. Belarus also made reference to national regulations aimed at protecting wildlife. It reported that work had started to revise the technical regulatory acts on forests with a view to harmonizing them with European Union standards. Belarus was a State party to the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora,<sup>2</sup> the Organized Crime Convention and the Convention against Corruption. No cases of illegal trade in flora and fauna in violation of the Endangered Species Convention had been registered in the period 2006-2007. It was also reported that national law enforcement authorities had taken measures to combat related criminal activities involving both individuals and organized criminal groups.

7. Bosnia and Herzegovina referred to national laws and other provisions on penal and criminal procedures relating to the prevention and fight against illicit international trade in forest products. It was reported that the national strategy against organized crime and corruption for the period 2006-2009 had prioritized the prevention of the production, sale, purchase and exchange of items or goods whose distribution was forbidden or limited pursuant to national regulations or international law.

8. Bosnia and Herzegovina also reported that it had signed bilateral agreements on law enforcement cooperation with a number of countries to tackle illicit international trade in forest products, including logs, wild animals and other forest biological resources. It was envisaged that such cooperation would be promoted through the exchange of information and experiences in using technologies,

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., vol. 993, No. 14537.

methods and investigation instruments and in preventing and punishing related offences; data on persons involved in such offences; legislative solutions; and publications and scientific research findings.

9. Bulgaria reported on specific provisions of domestic penal legislation addressing the illegal harvesting of and trafficking in forest products, as well as on the competent agencies responsible for forest management, protection and security.

10. Japan reported on regulations dealing with the trade in endangered species of wild fauna and flora, both within and beyond its borders. With regard to such trade in its territory, Japan specified that it had prohibited the transfer of ownership and/or the right of possession of those species. It further informed the Secretariat that, on the basis of the outcome of the Summit of the Group of Eight countries, held at Gleneagles, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, from 6 to 8 July 2005, Japan had introduced a green procurement policy for eliminating illegally logged timber from the market. That policy favoured wood and wood products harvested since April 2006 in a legal and sustainable manner. In line with that policy, guidelines had been drawn up to verify legality and sustainability of wood and wood products.

11. Japan had, together with Indonesia, signed a “joint announcement” and an action plan for cooperation in combating illegal logging and the trade in illegally logged timber and wood products. Information was provided on a number of technical development projects based on those instruments. At the regional level, Japan, together with Indonesia, had launched the Asia Forest Partnership on the occasion of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002. One of the principal objectives of that regional Partnership, aimed at promoting sustainable forest management in the Asian and Pacific region, was to tackle illegal logging. Since its establishment, more than 40 partners, including Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and research institutes, had joined the Asia Forest Partnership. Members meet at least once a year to promote voluntary cooperation and joint actions, exchange information and views and build mutual understanding and confidence.

12. Japan also reported on its principal role to promote the Asia Forest Partnership by hosting meetings and providing financial support. At the seventh meeting of the Partnership, held in Yokohama, Japan, in November 2007, partners had reviewed the outcome of the first phase of the Partnership (covering the period 2002-2007) and had unanimously agreed to continue with the second phase (covering the period 2008-2015) and to keep the fight against illegal logging one of their priorities. Japan also stressed that since it was the host country of the International Tropical Timber Organization as well as a major importer of tropical timber, it had actively supported activities and projects of the Organization against illegal logging for more than 20 years.

13. Latvia reported on its legal instruments aiming at ensuring adherence to the Endangered Species Convention. It also reported on cooperation between law enforcement authorities, the Convention’s management authority in Latvia and the customs authorities, particularly in terms of exchanging information about different offences. The Nature Protection Board of Latvia was identified as the national

competent authority for issuing export and import permits needed for the transportation of animals and plants and their products listed in the Convention.

14. Latvia also reported on relevant provisions of domestic penal legislation and confirmed its ratification of both the Organized Crime Convention and the Convention against Corruption.

15. Mauritius reported that none of its forest products, including timber, fruit, fodder and honey, was exported to foreign countries. In the case of imported timber, the customs department regularly called upon forestry officials to identify timber suspected to be protected species. It was also noted that the National Parks and Conservation Service issued permits for the export of plant and animal species, as regulated by the Endangered Species Convention, so as to ensure that endangered species were not being trafficked.

16. Mexico provided information on the existence of laws protecting rare or endangered species of fauna and flora and combating illegal trafficking in forest products and animals. A specific administrative organ responsible for the protection of natural resources in Mexico was also in place. In 2007, Mexico had announced a new Government programme against illegal harvesting of timber. As part of that programme, payments were reportedly being made to the owners of land and of resources in exchange for environmental services from the Government. In addition, preventive technical audits were being made to promote the application of environmental legislation. Moreover, indigenous populations were being called upon to cooperate in the struggle against trafficking in forest products and animals. Mexico also pointed out that specific import and export authorization was needed for the legal trade in forest products.

17. Namibia reported on the legal and policy measures in place to address trafficking in forest products, as well as on the relevant regulations and the strategic plan on forest management being prepared. Namibia also mentioned relevant law enforcement activities, including roadblocks and regular patrolling, that were being carried out to curb the illegal transportation and exportation of forest products. With a view to curbing the illegal and excessive harvesting and exploitation of forest resources, site inspections were being made.

18. Namibia also reported on its participation in negotiations for the elaboration of the Protocol on Forestry of the Southern African Development Community, which it was ready to sign. To achieve the objectives of that Protocol, State parties shall cooperate by promoting the sustainable management of forests and preventing the illegal utilization and trading of forest products. Namibia also subscribed to and supported the regional efforts on African Forest Law Enforcement and Governance and participated in different conferences on that subject.

19. Namibia provided an overview of the various types of permits (for harvesting, transporting, marketing and importing) issued to curb illegal activities involving forest products, and it referred to national agencies in charge of the fight against the illegal transportation, exportation and importation of forest products. In terms of awareness-raising, the Directorate of Forestry of the Ministry of Agriculture, Water and Forestry had continued its efforts to inform the public on the legal and environmental aspects of managing forest resources through community meetings and the media. Furthermore, the legal and policy framework on forest management was reported to have been translated into various indigenous languages to enable the

public to read those legal documents in their own languages. The Directorate was currently in the process of summarizing and presenting the national forest act in simpler terms for further translation into the indigenous languages.

20. The Netherlands pointed out that in recent years, particularly in the framework of the European Union but also in the framework of other international organizations, it had played an active role in strengthening ongoing international efforts to stop illegal logging and the trade in products of such logging. The Netherlands had been one of the main promoters of the conclusion of the so-called voluntary partnership agreements with third countries under the Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade (FLEGT) scheme of the European Union and had, for that purpose, inter alia, seconded a national expert to the delegation of the European Commission in Malaysia. The Netherlands was also supporting the FLEGT process in Ghana. Reference was also made to a study announced by the European Commission on additional legal measures to complement the FLEGT scheme, which would be released in the course of 2008.

21. The Netherlands stressed that a variety of additional policy measures, including guidelines for the public procurement of timber, had been identified and put in place to support the international developments mentioned above at the national level. The Public Prosecutor's Office had further examined a number of individual cases, but those criminal investigations had not yet resulted in any prosecutions. The Netherlands also noted that the possibilities to undertake criminal action on the basis of international legal instruments such as the Organized Crime Convention and the Convention against Corruption would be taken into consideration if a future case contained elements to do so.

22. Panama reported on progress made since 1995 in the area of developing national legislation to protect rare or endangered fauna and flora species. Panama had ratified the Endangered Species Convention in 1977. Reference was also made to the elaboration with Costa Rica of an operative manual to address problems related to the extinction of wildlife.

23. The Philippines reported on national initiatives to combat illegal logging and related activities. Reference was made to national legislation addressing the illegal trade in wildlife and mandating, inter alia, the creation of wildlife traffic monitoring units and authorizing wildlife enforcement officers from non-governmental organizations, citizens' groups, community organizations and other volunteers to seize illegally traded wildlife and to arrest the violators of the provisions. It was reported that a National Law Enforcement Coordinating Committee had been created to coordinate all activities, policies and procedures of law enforcement agencies and to facilitate the integration of efforts among competent agencies and the identification of priority areas for joint law enforcement action.

24. Information was provided regarding a short-term pilot project that the Government of the Philippines had embarked on in 2005. The project focused on the development of a collaborative mechanism among the various stakeholders to address the illegal trade in wildlife in Manila. Reference was also made to specific cases of related criminal activities.

25. The Philippines further expressed its readiness to translate regional and multilateral environmental plans and agreements into national programmes that would yield concrete results at the local level. A first step in that direction had been

the adoption, in 2003, of a national strategy to ensure the sustainable development of the country's forest land resources and the protection of key biodiversity areas. Furthermore, the Philippines had proposed a series of measures to build institutional capacity and strengthen law enforcement, including: the establishment of a mechanism for allocating funds to reward and provide protection to informants under witness protection programmes; the provision of legal assistance to forest law enforcement authorities, including members of the multisectoral forest protection committees; the application of laws against money-laundering and of mechanisms in the forest sector; and the enhancement of regional collaboration through the clearing-house mechanism of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

26. The Philippines also referred to regional initiatives aimed at addressing the problem of illegal logging and associated trade, such as the East Asia-Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (EA-FLEG) process, the Asia Forest Partnership and various programmes undertaken by the ASEAN secretariat, including the ASEAN Regional Action Plan on Trade in Wild Fauna and Flora, which had been launched in 2005, prompting the creation of the Wildlife Enforcement Network. The Network aimed to monitor wildlife trade in the region and make information available to ASEAN member States.

27. The Philippines also reported on its chairmanship of the EA-FLEG Regional Steering Committee and indicated its readiness to host a meeting at the ministerial level to deal with forest law enforcement and governance issues within the region in 2008. Since assuming the leadership in facilitating the process in 2005, the Philippines had hosted and chaired several meetings of EA-FLEG. Reference was made to specific achievements of the EA-FLEG process over the previous few years, including the holding of in-depth discussions and the building of consensus on three thematic areas: regional customs cooperation, transparency in the forest sector and reporting on efforts at the country level in forest law enforcement and governance.

28. With regard to the conservation and protection of wildlife and other forest biological resources, the Philippines was party to various environmental agreements, including the Convention on Biological Diversity,<sup>3</sup> the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage<sup>4</sup> and the Endangered Species Convention. It was reported that efforts had been made to strengthen the effectiveness of national laws, rules and regulations for implementing the provisions contained in the Endangered Species Convention.

29. Poland reported that it was party to the Endangered Species Convention which had been enforced under national law since 12 March 1990. Poland reported that, as a member State of the European Union, it was bound by several regulations and directives of the European Commission and the Council of the European Union regarding the international trade of wildlife and forest biological resources. Those binding commitments were enforced under the Environment Protection Act of 2004, which penalized illicit international trafficking in wildlife. Poland also mentioned its participation in the FLEGT scheme and in the Europe and North Asia Forest Law Enforcement and Governance Ministerial Process (whose aim was to curb illicit

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., vol. 1760, No. 30619.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., vol. 1037, No. 15511.

international trafficking in forest products, including timber), as well as its membership in the International Tropical Timber Organization.

30. Poland also reported that its national authorities were cooperating with the European Commission Enforcement Group mentioned in Council regulation No. 338/97 of 9 December 1996, as a result of which they were sharing information and experiences on trends in illicit trafficking in wild species and on new forms and methods being used to protect species and combat their trafficking. Moreover, Poland provided statistical data indicating that the country was gradually changing from being a transit State to being a destination State for trafficked wildlife that was being sold through the Internet, at markets and at pet shops.

31. Qatar stated that it had enacted and strictly implemented national regulations that prohibited the trade in endangered wildlife species. Qatar had also cooperated at the regional and international levels with States parties to the Endangered Species Convention through the application of the provisions contained in that instrument.

32. Serbia reported on the numerous activities it had carried out to prevent forestry-related crime. In accordance with standards set by the World Bank, new laws regulating such illicit activities had been introduced. Serbia also reported that, together with 43 other States, it had adopted the St. Petersburg Declaration at the Ministerial Conference on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance in Europe and North Asia in November 2005.<sup>5</sup> An action plan for the implementation of the Declaration was to be elaborated in coordination with the World Bank.

33. Serbia provided information on the problem of illegal logging in that country, including an analysis that dealt with various aspects such as logging without permission or concession from public forests, wood theft or illegal logging from private forests, false declarations of the volume, value or origin of harvested wood, obtaining logging authorization through bribes, monitoring mechanisms and trade in products of illegal logging. Serbia also made available a report prepared for the World Bank on ensuring the sustainability of forests and livelihoods through improved governance and better control over illegal logging. That report had been elaborated in cooperation with experts of national agencies and Government and non-governmental organizations.

34. Slovakia underscored its readiness to soon provide the Secretariat with information on its position regarding the need to adopt legislative measures to combat trafficking in forest products. Concerning the application of the Convention against Corruption, no requests for legal assistance or extradition were reported. As far as the Organized Crime Convention was concerned, Slovakia reported that it had responded to one request for legal assistance/extradition using that instrument as a legal basis.

35. Slovakia also reported on ongoing efforts to amend the national criminal code. Such amendments would not make legal persons criminally liable, but they would enable authorities to confiscate a certain amount of financial resources and property from legal entities.

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<sup>5</sup> The St. Petersburg Declaration is an expression of commitment by participating States to take action to address illegal logging and associated crimes. At the Conference, the participating Governments also identified an indicative list of actions for implementing the Declaration and included it as an annex to the Declaration.

36. Tunisia referred to national decrees regulating the exploitation of forest areas and provided information on national legislation dealing with trafficking in rare or endangered species of fauna and flora. It also reported on penal sanctions in place for addressing violations of that legislation and for punishing the establishment of organized criminal groups involved in trafficking in endangered species of flora and fauna. Such penal sanctions were coupled with administrative measures of a punitive nature, including the confiscation of illegal forest products and the closing down of illegal establishments. It was further noted that an ad hoc administrative organ had been established to elaborate and implement policies aimed at protecting the environment, while in 2003 the Government had begun awarding a prize to encourage the protection of fauna.

37. Tunisia also reported that it had ratified a number of international instruments on environmental issues, as well as bilateral and regional conventions promoting mutual legal assistance with neighbouring and European, African and Arab States.

### **III. Information provided by the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests**

38. Pursuant to resolution 16/1 of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, the Secretariat requested the secretariat of the United Nations Forum on Forests for information on issues related to forest law enforcement and governance.

39. In providing such information, the Forum secretariat stressed the political importance of forest law enforcement and governance issues and noted that they required urgent national, regional and international action by all stakeholders in order to achieve effective engagement and desired results. The secretariat also noted that the Forum played a significant role in countering forest-related illegal practices by carrying out activities ranging from preventing conflict to promoting community tenure and use rights. In line with decisions taken by the Forum, States had made concerted efforts, at the national level, to establish measures and enforce laws, with the aim of granting access to forest resources and land in a way that was sustainable, transparent and seen as legitimate by all stakeholders. The Forum secretariat also stressed that, as forest law enforcement and governance approaches intersected with many other policy areas, the need to strengthen collaboration among stakeholders was required.

40. The Forum secretariat reported that the problem of the illegal harvesting of and trafficking in forest products first emerged in the mid-1990s, at a time when the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, the predecessor of the Forum, was still active. In recent years, the problem had been gaining in importance and urgency at various international forums. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Governments called on the Forum to take immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and illegal international trade in forest products. At its second and third sessions, in 2002 and 2003, the Forum adopted resolutions on measures to be taken at the national and international levels to strengthen legislative frameworks, build enforcement capacity for monitoring and control and create verification techniques to help control illegal logging. Subsequently, at its fourth and fifth sessions, in 2004 and 2005, illegal logging and associated trade issues were considered in terms of

their impact on local communities and as sources of livelihoods. At the sixth session of the Forum, States reaffirmed their commitment to forest law enforcement and governance through the development and implementation of national forest programmes and relevant policies. Through capacity-building and the transfer of environmentally sound technologies, States were also urged to address illegal practices, according to national legislation and illegal international trade in forest products in the forest sector. It was also recognized that, to achieve that, it was important to take into account issues of land tenure schemes and their relationship to sustainable forest management, as well as forest governance at the local level. At the same time, closer partnerships with regional FLEG processes, among others, had been created and were viewed as critical to ensuring a complete and coherent international approach to the issue. Building upon the mandate of the Forum at its sixth session, the General Assembly adopted the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests (Assembly resolution 62/98). At its seventeenth session, the Forum adopted its multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015.

41. The non-legally binding instrument represented a historic landmark in terms of pushing forward the dialogue on forest issues of the past 15 years. The Forum secretariat underscored that the application of forest law enforcement and governance processes for strengthening national measures and policies, as well as international cooperation and means of implementation, was a prominent feature of the instrument. Besides bolstering the political commitment to sustainable forest management and enhancing the contribution of States to achieving internationally agreed development goals, the purpose of the instrument was to provide a framework for international cooperation. The instrument set out to achieve four global objectives: to reverse deforestation and prevent forest degradation; to enhance the benefits derived from forests including by improving the livelihoods of forest-dependent people; to increase the area of protected forests and other areas of sustainably managed forests, as well as the proportion of forest products harvested from such forests; and to reverse the decline in official development assistance for sustainable forest management and mobilize significantly increased, new and additional financial resources for the implementation of sustainable forest management.

42. In the non-legally binding instrument, Member States committed themselves to adopting national policies and measures for achieving the purpose of the instrument. Member States agreed that they should, *inter alia*, review and improve forest-related legislation, strengthen forest law enforcement and promote good governance to support sustainable forest management, and create an enabling environment for forest investment and combat and eradicate related illegal practices. Member States also defined measures of international cooperation and means of implementation, *inter alia*, to strengthen the capacity of countries to combat illicit international trafficking in forest products, including timber, wildlife and other forest biological resources. Enhanced public awareness, education, institutional capacity-building, technological transfer and technical cooperation, law enforcement and information networks were identified as means for achieving the purpose of the instrument.

43. As a result of the developments mentioned above, not only are forest law enforcement and governance on the draft provisional agenda of the eighth session of the Forum, to be held in New York from 20 April to 1 May 2009, but they are also scheduled to be discussed, in relation to progress made in the implementation of the

non-legally binding instrument and sustainable forest management, at all future sessions of the Forum. Moreover, forest law enforcement and governance are to be important cross-cutting issues addressed in the Multi-Year Programme of Work of the Forum.

44. The Forum secretariat also reported on its cooperation with the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, which comprises 13 other major international organizations, institutions and convention secretariats working on forest-related issues: the Centre for International Forestry Research, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the International Tropical Timber Organization, the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations, the secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity, the secretariat of the Global Environment Facility, the secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Agroforestry Centre, the World Bank and the World Conservation Union. The Collaborative Partnership on Forests supported the work of the Forum by fostering increased cooperation and coordination among its members. In addition to being its member, the Forum secretariat had also served as the secretariat of the Partnership, through which technical assistance was provided to States to help them develop, within post-conflict reconstruction programmes, national forest projects and other strategies for the sustainable management of forest resources.

45. Within the United Nations system, the Forum secretariat had, since 2005, been participating in the Task Force on Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat, particularly in the discussion concerning natural resources management and forests in the context of conflict situations and peacebuilding. The Forum secretariat had also developed a relationship with regional partnerships and processes, running programmes on forest law enforcement and governance, including through the Asia Forest Partnership, the Congo Basin Forest Partnership, a number of FLEG processes, the Ministerial Conference on the Protection of Forests in Europe and the Amazon Cooperation Treaty Organization. It was noted that such partnerships had shown that it was possible to network and participate in joint actions within regions and between processes and, therefore, to learn from experiences in different parts of the world.

46. The Forum secretariat also reported that, through initiatives such as the dialogue on best practices for business and civil society for finding practical solutions to combat illegal logging, held in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China from 8 to 10 March 2005, it had also worked with representatives of civil society to add its perspective and experience to the policy discussion. For example, participants in the dialogue mentioned above had highlighted the need to substantially strengthen law enforcement in both exporting and importing countries. Suggestions had been made on how exporting countries could enforce laws protecting forests of high value for conservation and on how they could protect local communities from the conflict created by illegal logging. Suggestions had also been made on how importing countries could improve existing laws to prosecute those involved in the importation and distribution of illicit forest products. At the dialogue, participants had emphasized the importance of prosecutions for preventing

money-laundering, tax evasion, counterfeiting, smuggling and false claims. The prosecution of big-time offenders, leaders of criminal syndicates and financiers of forest crime had been identified as being of the highest priority for combating forest crime. Participants in the dialogue had also urged consumer countries to make it illegal to import wood products that had been obtained illegally in the country of origin.

47. In view of the substantial contribution made to forest law enforcement and governance by ongoing collaborative activities such as those of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, the FLEG processes and the Task Force on Conflict Prevention, Peacebuilding and Development, the Forum secretariat underlined the great potential of enhanced collaboration. It also pointed out that launching activities to improve cooperation on technical matters, facilitate information sharing and establish collaboration with stakeholders in support of sustainable forest management were critical for combating illicit forest-related practices and achieving the implementation of the non-legally binding instrument.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

48. Information gathered by the Secretariat pursuant to resolution 16/1 of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice has confirmed the importance that Member States attach to the fight against the illicit international trade in forest products. In order to better target that crime, specific national laws and regulations should be adopted, regional instruments and mechanisms should be set up and international law enforcement cooperation should be strengthened. Replies from Member States also mentioned efforts to counter money-laundering, fight corruption, strengthen border controls and address organized crime in general as contributions to combating illicit trade in forest products.

49. Information received from the Forum secretariat echoed the call made by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice to increase synergies on matters related to forest law enforcement and confirmed that urgent action was required to address illegal trade in forest products and, in particular, to prosecute big-time offenders, leaders of organized criminal groups and financiers of forest-related crime.

50. Also noteworthy was the fact that at the Fourteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, held in The Hague, the Netherlands, from 3 to 15 June 2007, the secretariat of the Endangered Species Convention adopted a resolution on compliance and enforcement, in which it recommended its State parties that were not yet signatories to, or had not yet ratified, the Organized Crime Convention and the Convention against Corruption to consider doing so, recognizing that those conventions provide additional legal frameworks for international cooperation to combat wildlife crime; and directed the secretariat to pursue closer international liaison with, inter alia, UNODC.

51. Pursuant to resolution 16/1 of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, UNODC will organize an open-ended expert group meeting, further exploring the possibility of obtaining extrabudgetary resources for that purpose, and invite Member States, as well as interested United Nations bodies and other intergovernmental bodies, to explore ways to increase synergies between the

work of those involved in combating illicit trade in forest products and the criminal justice work of UNODC. To that end, prior to the meeting, UNODC will make suggestions to Member States on possible synergies to be pursued.

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